GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:6120
ANSWERED ON:05.05.2003
DECREASE IN POPULATION OF VULTURES
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Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government are aware that the population of vultures has come down drastically in the country over the last 10 years;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor;

(c) the names of agencies assigned the job of observing reduction in the population of wild animals and birds;

(d) the action taken by such agencies or the Government to regenerate the population of vultures; and

(e) the details of other such steps proposed by the Government to restore the balance in nature?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI DILIP SINGH JU DEV)

(a) & (b) Yes, Sir. Drastic decline in the population of mainly two species of vultures, namely, White-backed vulture and Long-billed vulture, was first observed in 1997. No definite cause for this decline has been ascertained. However, the main causes suggested by the experts are as under:

1. Adverse impact of pesticides and insecticides in the food chain of vultures.

2. Contagious disease of viral origin.

(c) & (d) Conservation of wildlife including monitoring population of wild animals and birds is primarily the responsibility of the forest departments of the states. Also, government/non-government organisations like Wildlife Institute of India, Bombay Natural History Society, World Wide Fund for Nature, etc. carry out wildlife conservation research projects including inter-alia, studies on population status of various species.

The specific measures taken by the government to regenerate the population of Vultures include:

I. Protection status of White-backed vulture and Long-billed vulture has been upgraded from Schedule IV to Schedule I of the Wild Life (Protection) Act 1972 providing them the highest degree of protection under the Act.

II. An international workshop was organised in New Delhi in September 2000 to work out a strategy for conservation of vultures.

III. Bombay Natural History Society in collaboration with the Haryana State Forest Department has taken up a project on vultures. A `Vulture Captive Care Facility` has been established at Panchkula.

(e) The steps taken for effective conservation of wildlife and its habitat thereby maintaining the ecological balance include:

I. Crucial habitats of various species of wild animals and birds have been notified as National Parks and Sanctuaries. Important National Parks and Sanctuaries are also notified as Ramsar Sites and World Natural Heritage Sites.

II. Management of the Wildlife Habitats is planned on scientific lines, allowing only such activities in the National Parks and Sanctuaries which are for betterment of Wildlife.

III. Supporting scientific research for monitoring the population status of various species and evolving strategies for in-situ and ex-situ conservation of various species.

IV. National Wildlife Action Plan, 2002-16 and Wildlife Conservation Strategy 2002 have been framed and adopted in January 2002.

V. Financial assistance is provided to State Governments for effective management of National Parks and Sanctuaries.